

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTORIA AUGUSTA AND PAGAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

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The Scholiast on Juvenal, writing in the later fourth century,¹ registers (on Juv. 4.53) the condemnation of the *delator* Palfurius Sura after the death of Domitian, and names three others, *sicut Marius Maximus scribit*. Ammianus, in his second diatribe on the *mores* of the Eternal City, comments sarcastically on the cultural deficiencies of the aristocracy. He had already written of their frivolous interests, singers and actors rather than philosophers and orators, and of their libraries, closed for ever like tombs (14.6.18). Now, he notes, “some of them, while hating learning like poison, read Juvenal and Marius Maximus with particular eagerness, turning over no volumes but these in their profound leisure—the reason for this is not a matter for my humble judgement”. Considering their claims to glory and noble ancestry, he thought they should read a great deal (28.4.14–15).²

These mentions apart, Maximus’ writings are known only from the *Historia Augusta* (hereafter HA): biographies of emperors, their heirs, and usurpers from Hadrian to the sons of Carus.³ The HA quotes Maximus’ *vitae* of Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, Pertinax, Severus, and Elagabalus. It has one general citation, “as Marius Maximus says in the life of many [sc.

¹ The terminus post quem is the prefecture of Naeratus Cerialis, A.D. 352–3 (*PLRE I Cerealis* 2), referred to on 10.24.

² Ammianus exaggerates: some aristocrats knew the classics, cf. Macrobius; or Holy Scripture, cf. Jerome.

³ In the oldest manuscript the work is called *vitae diversorum principum et tyrannorum a divo Hadriano usque ad Numerianum diversis compositi* (sic). It was first called ‘HA’ by its great editor Isaac Casaubon, inspired by the reference in *Tac.* 10.3 to the historian (allegedly the emperor Tacitus’ ancestor) as *scriptorem historiae Augustae*: Hohl, *S.H.A.* VII n. 1; Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* (1994) Xf. Callu, *BHAC* 1982/’83 (1985) 119ff., discusses the *Vita cesaru(m) v(e)l tira(n)noru(m) ab helio adriano us(que) ad Car(um) carinu(m) libri VII* in the Murbach library catalogue. References to HA lives are abbreviated as in Hohl, *S.H.A.* XV.

emperors]" (*AS* 21.4), and two comments. First, Maximus was one of those biographers who transmitted accurate information although not writing *diserte*, in the historians' high style (*Pr.* 2.6–7). But then he is castigated as long-winded (*homo omnium verbosissimus*), unlike Suetonius, who loved brevity—and because he *mythistoricis se voluminibus implicavit* (*Q* 1.1–2). Maximus' verbosity had already been exemplified: he devoted two *libri* to his *vita Marci* (*AC* 9.5), even more to his *vita Severi* (*G* 2.1), and included extensive documents. One was taken over verbatim (*C* 18.1–20.5), others omitted as too lengthy (*P* 2.6–9, 15.8). As the Scholiast presumably quoted Maximus' *vita Nervae*, Maximus is taken to have continued Suetonius' *Caesars*, covering Domitian's successors down to Elagabalus. He should be the HA's source for the many authentic names and other details on this period, their accuracy confirmed by epigraphy and by comparison e.g. with Cassius Dio.⁴

It is easy to understand Juvenal's appeal in Theodosian Rome. Perhaps Marius Maximus satisfied the same taste, for scandal and trivia. Besides, the Antonines, the essential subject of Maximus' *vitae*, were greatly in vogue. The Spanish emperor was hailed not only as Trajan's fellow-countryman, supposed to resemble Trajan physically and (negative aspects excepted) in the character of his rule, but actually as a descendant.⁵ Further, the aristocracy vaunted descent, not only, in a few cases, from the republican nobility (Fabii, Valerii, Scipios, and Gracchi),⁶ but, many more, from the Antonine and Severan élite.⁷ Descendants of Maximus' own family were perhaps connected to the Nicomachi Flaviani, which may help to explain

⁴ Birley, ANRW II.34.3 (1997) 2678ff., on Maximus (and on differing views on the source of the HA's 'factual' information down to A.D. 222). Barnes, *Sources* (1978), updated id., HAC n.s. III 1992 (1995) 1ff., requires modification in the light of new work on the *Kaisergeschichte* and the *Annales* of Flavianus, discussed briefly below.

⁵ Cf. e.g. Themistius, *Or.* 15.8, 204B–205B; 19.4, 229B–C; 19.8–9, 231D–232D; 34.7; Claudian, *De IV cons. Honorii* 18ff.; *Epit. de Caes.* 48.1, 8ff. Cf. Hartke, *Römische Kinderkaiser* (1951) 324ff.; Syme, *Emperors & Biography* (1971) 101ff.; Schlumberger, *Epitome* (1974) 230ff.; Chausson, HAC n.s. VI (1998) 105ff.

⁶ Note Jerome, *Epp.* 108.1: *Gracchorum stirps, suboles Scipionum, Pauli heres, cuius vocabulum trahit, Maeciae Papiriae, matris Africani, vera et germana progenies*; 54.1, 4 (Camillus and the Gracchi); 107.2 (Gracchi); 77.3 (Fabii). For Valerii, the name Publicola, ib. 39.5, cf. *PLRE I Publicola* 1–2, indicates the claim. Syme, *Ammianus and the HA* (1968), esp. 162ff., treats these genealogical claims as fiction. Chausson, in various papers (cf. next note and Bibliography), takes them more seriously.

⁷ Chausson, *Cahiers Glotz* 7 (1996) 319ff., and *Journal des Savants* 1997, 211ff., supplies copious examples.

why his *vitae* had been transmitted.⁸ These people would have enjoyed reading about their own ancestors. Shortly before his acid comment on Juvenal and Maximus, indeed, Ammianus makes derogatory remarks about the nobility's pride in their imposing names (28.4.7).⁹

Maximus was exploited by at least one other writer, the existence of whose lost history, labelled the *Kaisergeschichte* (hereafter KG), was first detected in 1883 by Enmann as the source for several fourth century works, notably Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and Jerome's continuation of Eusebius' *Chronicle*. The author of the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, writing soon after Theodosius' death, was likewise indebted to the KG—but via a source that had also used Maximus at first hand.¹⁰ Subsequently, Polemius Silvius used the KG for his *Laterculus*: as Burgess points out, the KG had given special attention to *tyranni*, usurpers. Further, Burgess shows that the KG was not completed until c. 357 and he can even offer 'a local habitation and a name' for its author: Eusebius Nanneticus (of Nantes), used by Ausonius (according to a medieval library catalogue) as the basis for verses (now lost) on usurpers between Decius and Diocletian.¹¹

In the last decades of the fourth century there were two further—more substantial—pagan Latin historians: Virius Nicomachus Flavianus and Ammianus. Flavianus "dedicated his *Annales* to Theodosius, whose quaestor and prefect he was, at the emperor's wish"; and was called *historicus disertissimus* by the husband of his granddaughter.¹² The chronology of Flavianus' career is debatable; but it is plausible that he became *quaestor intra palatium* after Theodosius' victory over Magnus

⁸ Chausson, *Journal des Savants*, esp. 307f. with n. 153.

⁹ The text is corrupt. Emendation produces *prae <ceteris> nominum claritudine conspicui quidam, ut putant, in immensum semet tollunt, cum Reburri [?] = Probi] et Faltonii et Ragonii Ceionique appellantur Albini cum Tarraciis [or: Pamac(h)ii?]* et Vitrasii aliisque ita decens sonantibus originum insignibus multis. Birley, HAC n.s. III 1992 (1995) 58ff., and ANRW II.34.3 (1997) 2681. Approved by Barnes, *Ammianus* (1998) 206ff., to whom the emendation *prae <ceteris> nominum* is owed.

¹⁰ Schlumberger, *Epitome*, esp. 128ff.

¹¹ Burgess, *Class Quart* 43 (1993) 491ff.; id., *Class Phil* 90 (1995) 111ff.; HAC n.s. VI 1996 (1998) 83ff. Eusebius is named in a list of Ausonius' writings compiled at Verona soon after 1320 by Giovanni Mansionario; first brought to scholarly notice in 1971 by R. Weiss, in R.R. Bolgar (ed.), *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 500–1500* (Cambridge, 1971), 67ff. Cf. Burgess' first paper here cited, 495ff., with further references; Paschoud, *Vies d'Aurélien, Tacite* (1996) XXXVIII.

¹² *CIL* VI 1783 = *ILS* 2948 (below, n. 14); set up by his grandson; *CIL* VI 1782 = *ILS* 2947. The dedicator of the latter inscription, son of the orator Symmachus, married the elder Flavianus' granddaughter in A.D. 401, *PLRE* II *Symmachus* 12.

Maximus in 388 and was invited to dedicate his *Annales* to the emperor soon afterwards.¹³ That he wrote *Annales* is known only from an inscription set up thirty-seven years after his suicide in September 394;¹⁴ they are nowhere explicitly cited; and there is no agreement as to whether they covered Republican or imperial history (or both).¹⁵

Schlumberger, following a lead by Hartke, argued persuasively that Flavianus' *Annales* were used by the author of the *Epitome de Caesaribus*. Not all were convinced.¹⁶ But Bleckmann has shown that Zonaras relied, for the period after Cassius Dio's *History* ends (A.D. 229) until well into the fourth century, principally on a writer identifiable as Peter the Patrician (*magister officiorum* under Justinian), and that Peter himself must have used a Latin, pagan history for the period post-229, perhaps precisely Flavianus' *Annales*.¹⁷ Bleckmann has now reinforced this case.¹⁸ Signs had already been detected of Zosimus' source for the fourth century, Eunapius, having used a—certainly pagan—Latin historian. Paschoud demonstrated that the story of Gratian's refusal of the pontifical robe and the response (a *vaticinium post eventum*) prophesying his overthrow by Magnus Maximus, could only have been composed in Latin.¹⁹ Whether Flavianus could have dedicated a work including this story to the most Christian emperor Theodosius, might seem doubtful. Still, Theodosius' attitude to the house of Valentinian was not entirely positive. Further, the historian could have gained favour with laudatory accounts of the elder Theodosius' deeds in Britain and Africa. Flavianus' service as *vicarius* in Africa, shortly after the general's sudden execution there, would

¹³ See on the quaestorship J.F. Matthews, in Honoré, *Virius Nicomachus Flavianus* (1989) 18ff. On Flavianus' father and family, see now Chausson, *Antiquité Tardive* 4 (1996) 245ff.

¹⁴ *CIL* VI 1783 = *ILS* 2948, lines 19–21: *cuius (sc. Theodosii) in eum effusa benivolentia et usq(ue) ad annalium, quos consecrari sibi a quaestore et praefecto suo voluit, provecta, excitavit livorem inprobtorum*.

¹⁵ Zecchini, *Ricerche* (1993) 57ff., argues that the *Annales* covered both Republic and Empire. See now Bleckmann, *Historia* 44 (1995) 83ff.; Festy, ib. 46 (1997) 465ff.; Ratti, ib. 46 (1997) 479ff. Precisely when Flavianus wrote (and whether he produced a second edition) remains conjectural.

¹⁶ Hartke, *Geschichte* (1940) 74ff., and *Kinderkaiser* 330ff.; Schlumberger, *Epitome*, esp. 240ff., and, replying to critics, *BHAC* 1982/'83 (1985) 305ff.

¹⁷ Bleckmann, *Die Reichskrise* (1992), esp. 396ff. (cautious but convincing). Among other results, he showed that the Anonymus post Dionem is identical with Peter. For enthusiastic approval, Paschoud, *Antiquité Tardive* 2 (1994) 71ff.; cf. id., *Aurélien . . .* XLIIIf. and *Symbolae Osloenses* 73 (1998) 80ff.

¹⁸ Bleckmann, *HAC* n.s. III (1995) 75ff., and *Historia* 44 (1995) 83ff.

¹⁹ Paschoud, *Cinq études* (1975), esp. 63ff., 147ff.

have provided an excellent opportunity to gather information on the African campaign.²⁰ Ammianus probably used an existing history for his detailed account of these events: perhaps these *Annales*.²¹ Hostile elements in his account of Valentinian (a 'travesty') may well derive from Flavianus.²²

All this is speculation, to be sure. Still, Bleckmann has shown that a Latin pagan historian had covered the period from c. 230 to Gratian's death, and, whether Flavianus or an *anonymus*, was used by Eunapius, Ammianus, the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, and Peter the Patrician.²³ Emphasis on relations between emperor and senate, stories about individual third-century senators, (Aradius) Rufinus, (Nummius) Albinus, and Pomponius Bassus, and other features, show that the work was strongly pro-senatorial.²⁴ The presentation of Aurelian, cruel but militarily effective, might deliberately reflect Valentinian.²⁵ Detail on how Constantine mocked his predecessors—Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian, M. Aurelius, and Severus—would make a striking contrast to Theodosius' respect towards the Antonines, especially Trajan.²⁶ Likewise, the work criticised Valentinian for making Valens co-emperor simply because he was his brother—Valens' incompetence led to disaster. That, for patriotic reasons, Claudius II is said to have made the Gothic war his first priority, rather than

²⁰ I owe this suggestion to W. Liebeschuetz. Flavianus as *vicarius*: *PLRE I Flavianus* 15.

²¹ Ammianus tactfully omitted the death of the elder Theodosius, but alluded to it by the comparisons with Lusius Quietus and Corbulo (29.5.4). Valens, still nervous about the Theodorus oracle, must have ordered the deed: N. Gasperini, "La morte di Teodosio padre", *Contributi dell'Istituto di storia antica* (Milan) 1 (1972) 150–197.

²² Paschoud, *Cognitio Gestorum* (1992) 67ff. Gratian's excessive devotion to his Alan bodyguard (*Epit. de Caes.* 47.6) is another negative feature perhaps attributable to the *Annales*.

²³ Paschoud, *Antiquité Tardive* 2, 71ff., basically follows Bleckmann, but prefers to restrict the HA's use of Flavianus to the period after the end of Dexippus. For the HA's use of Dexippus, Paschoud, *HAC* n.s. I (1991) 217ff. Cf. his stemma of sources, *Antiquité Tardive* 2, p. 80.

²⁴ Respectively Anon. post Dionem fr. 7; id. fr. 10.2; *Epit. de Caes.* 34.3. Cf. Schlumberger, *Epitome* 178, on Bassus and others and the 'traditionsbewußte römisch-senatorische' spirit of the *Epitome*. On Rufinus and Albinus, Bleckmann, *Reichskrise* 324ff., 401f.

²⁵ See now esp. Paschoud, *Cognitio Gestorum* 80ff.; id., *Aurélien* . . . 7ff.

²⁶ *Epit. de Caes.* 41.13 (Trajan); Anon. post Dionem fr. 15.2 (the full list, breaking off with Severus), discussed by Bleckmann, *Historia* 40 (1991) 356, 361; id., *Reichskrise* 402; *Historia* 44, 97f., citing, for the contrast, Pacatus, *PL* 12 (2). 11.6, where Theodosius is presented as the 'Vollender der mit Augustus einsetzenden Reihe guter Kaiser'.

attacking a pretender (Postumus), and that Valentinian chose to fight the Alamanni rather than the usurper Procopius, is implicitly to praise Theodosius, who tolerated Magnus Maximus for years, tackling the Huns and Goths instead.²⁷

Cracco Ruggini has surely proved that it was not Flavianus, but Praetextatus (who died in December 384), who was attacked in the *Carmen contra paganos*. This entails a revised view of Flavianus' religious position. He cannot be the unnamed prefect who led a frenetic three-month campaign to revitalise paganism, with emphasis on oriental cults. Flavianus can still be regarded as a pagan paladin. As praetorian prefect, he joined Eugenius and Arbogast, circulated an oracle prophesying the end of Christianity in the 365th year (i.e. A.D. 394), and promised that after victory his side would stable its horses in a Milan basilica and conscript monks into the army. But Flavianus' choice of Jupiter and Hercules to counter Theodosius' *labarum* at the Frigidus shows that his religion was austere and traditional, not the new paganism of the orientalizers (easy targets for Christians)—the foremost of whom was Praetextatus. Flavianus sought to restore the Jovian-Herculean theology of Diocletian and the tetrarchs. The fanaticism of Julian would not have appealed to him—or to Symmachus. Flavianus was provoked to desert Theodosius by the anti-pagan legislation of 391–2, which marked a sharp break in policy.²⁸

After this preamble, a bare description must be given of the HA's nature and content. It covers the emperors, legitimate or 'usurpers', and their heirs, for the years 117–285. There is a lacuna for the years 244–260: hence no *vitae* of Philip and Decius and their respective sons, Aemilianus, and Gallus and his son Volusian; and that of Valerian only begins after his capture by the Persians. There are thirty *vitae*: from Hadrian to Elagabalus each minor figure has a separate *vita*, while from the two Maximini onwards a single *vita* covers

²⁷ Bleckmann, *Historia* 44, 89ff., on Zonaras 12.25 and Amm. Marc. 26.4.1–2, 26.5.13.

²⁸ Cracco Ruggini, *Il paganesimo romano* (1979), passim. Supporting her identification: F. Dolbeau, "Damase, le *Carmen contra paganos* et Hériger de Lobbes", *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 27 (1981) 38–43; D. Shanzer, "The anonymous *Carmen contra paganos* and the date and identity of the centonist Proba", *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 32 (1986) 232–248; ead., "The date and identity of the centonist Proba", *Recherches Augustiniennes* 27 (1994) 75–96.

joint rulers, and usurpers (*tyranni*) are grouped together, thirty-two in one *vita* (*TT*) four in another (*Q*).

Certain recurring features were early recognised as suspect, particularly the documents, mostly letters and speeches, cited as authentic: only the lengthy piece attributed to Maximus (*C* 18.1–20.5) is now accepted as genuine. Further, besides Maximus, Herodian, and Dexippus, the HA claims as sources thirty-five writers otherwise unknown and surely invented.²⁹ There is much more spurious material, which none would now defend, especially in the ‘secondary’ lives, i.e. of Caesars, usurpers, and short-lived or junior emperors, in the series from Hadrian to Elagabalus; the lives from Severus Alexander onwards are stuffed with fiction. Nonetheless, at 549 pages in Hohl’s edition, the HA is the fullest surviving Latin source for a century and a half of Roman history, and has to be used: truth must be sorted out from fiction. This requires investigating the mentality behind the work, its authorship, date of composition, and purpose. Despite deliberately misleading indications to the contrary—six separate authors, writing variously under the first tetrarchy or Constantine—the search has led to the age of Theodosius: the names of the ‘Scriptores’ are pseudonyms for a single author, whose unmasking, and the ensuing debate, can be sketched only briefly here.

The indices to the manuscripts (the order is disturbed in places) attribute the *vitae* to ‘Aelius Spartianus’, ‘Julius Capitolinus’, ‘Vulcacius Gallicanus, *v(ir) c(larissimus)*’, ‘Aelius Lampridius’, ‘Trebellius Pollio’, and ‘Flavius Vopiscus, Syracusius’. As several of these claim to have written a good many more *vitae* than those under their name in the HA, it seemed natural to infer that an ‘editor’—anonymous—made the ‘selection’, after A.D. 324, the latest dated allusion (*Hel.* 35.6, cf. *Gd.* 34.3–6).³⁰ The Corpus begins abruptly: *Origo imperatoris Hadriani vetustior* (*H.* 1.1). A preface must have been lost, it seems—damage to the manuscript, as with the lacuna, is postulated—perhaps also *vitae* of Nerva and Trajan: logically, the HA is taken, like Maximus’ *vitae*, to be a continuation of Suetonius, but going beyond Maximus, to A.D. 285.³¹

²⁹ Syme, *HA Papers* (1983) 98ff.

³⁰ The identification of the author of the HA as the younger Nicomachus Flavianus, proposed by Hartke, *Geschichte*, has been revived by Callu, *Vies d’Hadrien*... (1992), esp. LXXff., and elsewhere. For criticism of his elaborate theory of the HA’s composition, Paschoud, *Aurélien*... XXXff.

³¹ Hartke, *Kinderkaiser* 324ff., sought to prove that the HA ‘begann abrupt und

In compensation, several lives after the *Hadrian* have prefaces, some addressed to emperors;³² and rulers are addressed or referred to as alive in the body of some *vitae*. That of Hadrian's heir L. Aelius Caesar opens *Diocletiano Augusto Ael(ius) Spartianus suus sal(utem)*. 'Spartianus' announces his plan, "already achieved as far as Hadrian", to compose lives not only of all *principes* but also of those who only became Caesar but not Augustus, further, of those "who in any other fashion whatsoever have attained to either the fame or the hope of the principate (i.e. usurpers)." Shortly afterwards (*Ael.* 2.2) he refers to Galerius and Constantius as Caesars, implying a date between 293 and 305. 'Capitolinus' in the *Marcus* (*MA* 19.12) and *Verus* (*V* 11.4) likewise addresses Diocletian. Then comes the first usurper, Avidius Cassius, portrayed very positively, in the only *vita* assigned to 'Vulcacius Gallicanus': he informs Diocletian that he plans lives of all who had the name of *imperator*, *sive iuste sive iniuste, ut omnes purpuratos, Auguste, cognosceres* (*AC* 3.3).

The next three lives, attributed to 'Lampridius', 'Capitolinus', and 'Spartianus', have no reference to the time of writing.³³ In the *Severus*, 'Spartianus' offers Diocletian reflections on the defects of hereditary succession (*S* 20.4–21.12). In the *vita* of Severus' rival Pescennius Niger, 'Spartianus' tells Diocletian that he has done his best, after much research, in spite of the lack of materials on unrecognised rulers, and will now proceed to Albinus (*PN* 9.1–4). Yet the *Albinus* is assigned to 'Capitolinus'; and one of the noble families to which its subject allegedly belonged, the Ceionii, is said to have been exalted by "you, greatest Constantine" (*CLA* 4.2). The *Caracalla*, by 'Spartianus', has no contemporary reference, but his *Geta* invokes (*G* 1.1) *Constantine Auguste*. The *Albinus* and *Geta* are thus ostensibly later than the *Pescennius*, likewise than the *Macrinus*, by 'Capitolinus', who explains that *quae de plurimis collecta serenitati tuae, Diocletiane Auguste, detulimus, quia te cupidum veterum imperatorum esse perspeximus* (*OM* 15.4). He had opened with an

ohne Einleitung, wie sie uns vorliegt'; at 351 n. 1 he refers to an unpublished sketch on these lines by C. Cichorius, which he intended to work up (nothing seems to have come of it). Hartke's case is criticized by Syme, *Emperors* 95ff., and Stubenrauch, *Kompositionsprobleme* (1982) 59–104, defending the view that the original opening is lost. Den Hengst, *The Prefaces* (1981) 14ff., is non-committal, likewise Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* XXXV.

³² Den Hengst, *Prefaces*; Stubenrauch, *Kompositionsprobleme*.

³³ The *Commodus* of 'Lampridius' begins with a reference to the *vita Marci Antonini*, as if he had written it—yet the *HA vita* is given not to him, but to 'Capitolinus'.

elaborate justification for producing “lives of those *principes* or usurpers who did not long rule”, whose lives are inevitably obscure (*OM* 1.1–5). The brief *vita* of Macrinus’ son (*Dd*), by ‘Lampridius’—only the second ‘contribution’ by this author—is largely fiction, with no reference to a living emperor. The two further lives by ‘Lampridius’, of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, are both dedicated to Constantine, “who venerated *sanctum illud Antoninorum nomen*, polluted by Elagabalus” (*Hel.* 2.4).

The *vita* ends with a long address to Constantine (*Hel.* 34.1–35.7), citing his alleged dictum *imperatorem esse fortunae est* to explain how *haec clades* [Elagabalus] *loco principum fuerit*. ‘Lampridius’ had written this *vita* reluctantly, only because Constantine pressed him (*Hel.* 35.1). He will now “write of those who followed after . . . the glory of them all being Claudius, founder of your family”—which makes him nervous that he will be accused of flattery. He will go right up to Diocletian, “father of the golden age”, and Maximian (perhaps meaning Galerius), “father of the age of iron”. Others, more talented, must devote many—and more eloquent—pages to Constantine. Still, the four “whose power fell under your control, Licinius, Severus, Alexander, and Maxentius”, also require treatment, which must be fair and objective: “For I shall not follow the common practice . . . and belittle the merits of those who have been defeated: I realize that it enhances your glory if I declare all the good qualities that they possessed, with truthfulness” (*Hel.* 35.1–5). This statement could only have been written after Licinius’ defeat in 324. Whether anyone would then have dared to express such an intention is another matter.³⁴

The *Severus Alexander* is easily the longest life, occupies a central position, and is a largely fictional “mirror for princes”: Alexander, the ideal ruler, is the exact opposite of his perverted cousin. It has no preface, but at the end ‘Lampridius’ writes: “You regularly ask, greatest Constantine, what it was that made a Syrian and alien-born person such a great *princeps*” (*AS* 65.1). The reply is lengthy and involved (65.2–68.4), stressing Alexander’s refusal to admit eunuchs to his councils and ministries, with an astonishing comment: “I know that it is dangerous to say things like this to an emperor who has been subject to such creatures”—but you, Constantine, have now learned to keep them in their place (*AS* 66.3–67.1).

³⁴ A similar date is implied by a remark about Licinius, *Gd.* 34.4–6.

There follow multiple *vitae* by 'Capitolinus': two Maximini, three Gordians, Maximus (Pupienus) and Balbinus. Addressing Constantine (*Max* 1.1–3), 'Capitolinus' explains that, to save wearying the emperor, he has put the two Maximini into one volume and will adopt the same practice from now on (except for the great emperors). The point is repeated in the next *vita* (*Gd* 1.1–5), at the end of which, after a derogatory remark about Licinius, "greatest Constantine" is assured that the author has investigated everything worth knowing on his subject (*Gd* 34. 3–6).

After the last 'Capitolinus'-*vita* (*MB*) comes the lacuna, although "there are no frayed edges at the beginning or end of it".³⁵ The final part, covering 260–285, is divided between 'Trebellius Pollio', on two Valerians, two Gallieni, 'Thirty Tyrants', and Claudius with his brother Quintillus, and 'Flavius Vopiscus Syracusius' on Aurelian, Tacitus with his 'brother' Florianus, Probus, a *Quadruga tyrannorum*, and Carus with his sons. 'Vopiscus' is apparently later than 'Pollio', whom he cites for biographies "from the two Philips to Claudius and Quintillus" (*A* 2.1) and praises for his diligence and care in covering thirty usurpers in one book (*Q* 1.3). 'Pollio' calls Claudius II "head of the family of our Caesar Constantius", the man "from whom the most vigilant Caesar Constantius derives his origin" (*Gall.* 7.1, 14.3). He must take special care, "out of respect for Constantius Caesar", but is not praising Claudius to curry favour with Constantius (*Cl.* 1.1, 3.1). An oracle shows that Claudius' family is "divinely appointed to bring felicity to the state" (*Cl.* 10.1); "Constantius, . . . himself from the family of an Augustus, will give us, likewise, many Augusti of his own—with all safety to the Augusti Diocletian and Maximian and his brother Galerius" (*Cl.* 10.7). Finally, he specifies Constantius' relationship to Claudius (*Cl.* 13.1–4). Elsewhere 'Pollio' stresses his aims: to ensure "historical fidelity . . . for I have not promised myself eloquence, but facts;³⁶ I am not writing, but dictating, these little books . . . on the life of *principes*, and dictating with such haste that . . . I have no chance to draw breath" (*T* 11.6–7, 33.8).³⁷

'Vopiscus', ostensibly writing when Constantius was already emperor,

³⁵ Den Hengst, *Prefaces* 71, adding to the arguments of Birley, BHAC 1972/'74 (1976) 55ff., for the lacuna being deliberate, cf. below.

³⁶ Cf. Olympiod., fr. 1, who excused his style (criticized by Photius) on the grounds that he was providing not history but the materials for history.

³⁷ On the claim to have been dictating in haste, cf. below.

i.e. 305–6 (*A* 44.5), begins with an anecdote. At the Hilaria he was invited by the prefect of Rome Junius Tiberianus into his official carriage. They talked of many things, especially *de vita principum*. Tiberianus, dismayed that the great Aurelian, to whom he was related, was unknown to posterity, offered ‘Vopiscus’ access to sources and urged him to write Aurelian’s life. They also discussed ‘Trebellius Pollio’, whom Tiberianus criticized for carelessness and brevity. ‘Vopiscus’ countered that no historical writer had not told some sort of falsehood, citing Livy, Sallust, Tacitus, and Trogus. Tiberianus accepted this, adding: “Write whatever you like, for you can be sure to have as companions in falsehood those whom we admire as masters of historical eloquence” (*A* 1.1–2.2).

Two prefects called Junius Tiberianus are attested, in 291–2 and in 303–4; only the first was in office during the Hilaria (25 March).³⁸ In the *Probus*, ‘Vopiscus’ lets the mask slip: among the predecessors he praises are ‘Capitolinus’ and ‘Lampridius’ (*Pr.* 2.7)—yet Lampridius dedicated his work to Constantine, and ‘Capitolinus’ was still writing after 324: ‘Vopiscus’ was at work in 305–6 (*A* 44.5). Minor problems, compared with the contradictions which provoked Dessau’s revolutionary paper.³⁹ The *HA* could not have been written under Diocletian and Constantine, he argued. Constantine’s descent from Claudius II, so prominent in the ‘Pollio’-lives, was first made public—as a novelty—in 310.⁴⁰ ‘Pollio’ apparently knew about it over five years earlier. Names first prominent in the later fourth century are introduced in fictional contexts: Toxotius, Ragonius Celsus, Faltonius Probus, Clodius Celsinus. The prophecy about the emperor Probus’ descendants (*Pr.* 24.1) must allude to the family of Petronius Probus (cos. 371), father of the consuls of 395. The Gothic-Alan ancestry assigned to Maximinus (*Max.* 1.5–6) was inconceivable before the later fourth century. Two lengthy passages were surely lifted from Aurelius Victor and Eutropius, who did not publish until the 360s.⁴¹ The *HA* was the work of a single author, not six: the ‘Scriptores’ shared similarities of technique, the same kind of invented documents and turns of phrase, the same weakness for punning on names.

³⁸ See e.g. Johne, *Kaiserbiographie* (1976), esp. 141ff.

³⁹ Dessau, *Hermes* 24 (1889) 337ff.

⁴⁰ *PL* VI (VII) 2.1–2 (A.D. 310) refers to the *avita cognatio* from Claudius II as something that ‘most people perhaps do not yet know’. Syme, *HA Papers* 66ff., discusses ‘The fraud of the year 310’.

⁴¹ *S* 17.5ff. > *Aur. Vict.* 20.1ff.; *MA* 16.3ff. > *Eutrop.* 8.11ff.

Dessau concluded that the HA was a *Fälschung*, composed in the 390s.⁴² As to motive, he conjectured that the unknown author (posing as the discoverer of a collection of *vitae* from an earlier era) hoped to arouse greater interest by a “Mystifikation”.

Answering criticism by Mommsen⁴³ and others, Dessau noted further anachronisms, but declined to tackle at length Mommsen’s question: *cui bono*?⁴⁴ Debate over details continues, but a date c. 400 and a single author, Dessau’s basic contentions, are now the *communis opinio*.⁴⁵ Attention has concentrated on distinguishing truth from fiction, identifying sources or literary borrowings and echoes, and refining the date of composition, so as to establish the the author’s milieu, methods, and intentions.

For these questions, fiction is more instructive than ‘facts’. Of the historical sources acknowledged as such only Herodian is extant. Naturally—and typically for ancient writers—he was used far more than is openly admitted; and on several occasions is cited under the name of Arrianus rather than Herodianus (to mislead or to multiply authorities, or by inadvertence).⁴⁶ The way that Herodian’s version is transformed is instructive: the HA makes the senatorial co-emperors of 238, Pupienus and Balbinus, a contrasted pair, the former very plebeian, the latter blue-blooded. The effect is impressive.⁴⁷ Yet Herodian says—and epigraphy confirms—that Pupienus was just as well-born as his colleague. Was the HA deliberately teasing, or seeking to annoy Pupienus’ descendants?⁴⁸

⁴² Barnes, *Historia* 44 (1995) 497–500, and (more fully) *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 79 (1997) 259–267, shows how Dessau’s use of *Fälschung* has been misunderstood from Hohl (in 1914) onwards, and that Dessau clearly followed a technical definition by E. Bernheim.

⁴³ Mommsen, *Hermes* 25 (1890) 228ff., conceded anachronism, but offered an elaborate six-stage (not ‘three-stage’ as has been claimed) process to explain the character of the work, with revisions up to the Theodosian period: on this ‘labyrinthine edifice’, cf. Syme, *The HA* 18ff.

⁴⁴ Dessau, *Hermes* 27 (1892) 561ff.

⁴⁵ For surveys: Hohl, *Wiener Studien* 71 (1958) 132–152; Chastagnol, *Recherches sur l’HA* (1970); Johne, *Kaiserbiographie* 11ff.; Lippold (one of a handful of remaining dissenters from Dessau), *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 15 (1991) 687ff.; id., *Kommentar zur v. Maximini Duo* (1991) 3ff. (to a large extent answered by Brandt, *Kommentar zur v. Maximi et Balbini* (1996) 13ff.); Callu, *Hadrien*. . . VIIff.; Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* IXff.; Paschoud, *Aurélien*. . . IXf.

⁴⁶ Cf. Straub, *Studien* 23, 156 n. 122; Barnes, *Sources* 37; Brandt, *Kommentar* 118f.

⁴⁷ Syme, *Emperors* 170ff.; 253ff.

⁴⁸ Herodian 8.7.4, 8.1 (the HA was perhaps misled by Herodian 7.10.4, where Balbinus is called a patrician, Pupienus is not); on Pupienus, Syme, *Emperors* 173ff., and, with new detail, Chausson, *Cahiers Glotz* 7, 319ff.

Borrowings, adaptations, or echoes from late fourth and early fifth century authors have also been identified: notably Jerome, Ammianus, and Claudian.⁴⁹ Sceptics refuse assent, or assert reverse borrowing, by the later writers from the HA, written—as is pretended—in the years c. 305–324; or, with the HA passages drawn from Victor and Eutropius, it is claimed that all three used the KG.⁵⁰ By contrast, it is now even possible to detect the names of fourth century historians whom the HA knew and used—but could not cite because of the fictional time of writing: ‘Camouflaged’ in context or slightly altered are ‘Aurelius Victor’ and ‘Festus’ (*OM* 4.2–4), the bogus biographer ‘Valerius Marcellinus’ (*MB* 4.5) or ‘Fabius Marcellinus’ (*AS* 48.6; *Pr.* 2.7), ‘Eutropius’, an invented kinsman of Claudius II (*Cl.* 13.2), ‘Nicomachus’ the translator (*A* 27.6), perhaps even Eusebius Nanneticus, the postulated author of the KG, as ‘Claudius Eusthenius’ an invented biographer of the tetrarchs (*Car.* 18.5).⁵¹

Some who accepted Dessau’s basic case offered variant datings. Long influential was Baynes’ claim that the HA was propaganda for Julian, written in the 360s. It no longer has any support.⁵² Others have argued for a later date, well into the fifth century.⁵³ The consensus now puts the HA after the defeat of the pagan cause at the Frigidus (September 394), but not much, perhaps 399 or at latest c. 406, more or less contemporary with the *Epitome de Caesaribus*.⁵⁴ As for the unity of authorship, Dessau still has critics. But his criteria have been greatly extended,⁵⁵ and the computer has been used

⁴⁹ Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste*, esp. LXXXIXf. (Ammianus), XCIIIff. (Jerome and Claudian), with further literature.

⁵⁰ This argument is revived by Chausson, HAC n.s. V (1997) 97ff. But for the HA’s use of Victor and Eutropius, see e.g. Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* LXVIII.

⁵¹ Schlumberger, *Epitome* 129f., noting that in *AS* 48.6f. ‘Fabius Marcellinus’ appears with ‘Aurelius Verus’ and ‘Statius Valens’, sees in the first a reference to Ammianus, the second to Victor, the third to Eutropius, who dedicated his *Breviarium* to Valens. Paschoud, *Historia* 44 (1995) 502ff., adds Nicomachus and Eusthenius-Eusebius.

⁵² Baynes, *The HA* (1926). See Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* XXVIII.

⁵³ Notably Straub, *Studien* 75ff., and *Heidnische Geschichtsapologetik* (1963); latterly Kolb, *Untersuchungen* (1987) 68ff.

⁵⁴ Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* XXXff., summarizes, his own preference being 395–399; Paschoud, *Aurélien* . . . XIIIff., favours the years between 395–7 and 404–6, the latter terminus being supplied by *A* 18.5–21.4, notably the consultation of the Sibylline Books, destroyed by Stilicho at latest in 408. The defeat of the pagan Radagaisus in 406 by Christian forces “ruinait la démonstration implicite contenue dans le passage en question de la *vita Aureliani*, qui doit donc être antérieur à cette date” (id., p. XVII).

⁵⁵ E.g. White, *JRS* 57 (1967) 115ff.; Mouchová, *Untersuchungen* (1975).

in support.⁵⁶ Claims based on further computer-generated enquiries that differences of style do show up⁵⁷ do not convince. As Dessau pointed out, it inevitably made for variation when the author, in different parts of his work, hurriedly abbreviated a detailed earlier Latin source (e.g. the *verbosissimus* Maximus), translated and adapted Greek ones (Herodian, Dexippus), or composed fiction.⁵⁸ He was widely read: not merely in the classics and new literature of the fourth century but in technical works too.⁵⁹ Because he disclaimed the higher eloquence, he did not have to polish and standardise everywhere. Like most historical writers, he took over his material from wherever he could find it. Haste made it impossible to recast it all. In places he could achieve pleasing effects, although some fine phrases may not be his own. Gibbon remarked of *discordiae . . . sed tacitae, et quae intelligerentur potius quam viderentur* (MB 14.1) that “this well-chosen expression is probably stolen from some better writer”.⁶⁰

Changes of source (or of tack) are often clearly signalled, with—clear sign of impatience—expressions such as *et quoniam longum est minora persequi, huius magnifica illa*, this one followed by the extract adapted from Victor (S 17.5–19.3).⁶¹ Muddle and confusion is apparent with emperors who had heirs, colleagues, or rivals—usurpers—who were assigned separate lives: the need to reserve material from the source for the ‘secondary’ life caused difficulty with the completion of the ‘primary’ life, which then in some cases seemed too short, making necessary the addition of further material, often fictional.⁶²

The author was determined to amuse himself and a group of friends, there can be no doubt. But even if, as Syme argued,⁶³ this

⁵⁶ Marriott, *JRS* 69 (1979) 65ff.

⁵⁷ Meißner, *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 34 (1992) 47ff., and HAC n.s. V 1994 (1997) 175ff.

⁵⁸ Dessau, *Hermes* 27, 595ff. Meißner, HAC n.s. V (1997) 215, concedes that the use of ‘älteres Material über weite Strecken nur unwesentlich verändert’ has resulted in a relatively non-uniform style.

⁵⁹ Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* LIIf., LXXIVff., with full bibliography on the author’s reading habits; on technical works, Syme, *Ammianus and the HA* 130, and *Emperors* 251.

⁶⁰ E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* I (London, Bell & Daldy, 1872) 239 (Ch. VII). Cf. also on MB 14.1 Brandt, *Kommentar* 216f. (not citing Gibbon).

⁶¹ Mouchová, *Untersuchungen* 19ff., discusses *longum est* and related turns of phrase.

⁶² MA 19.5 (*et quidem haec breviter et congeste*) is one of several passages reflecting haste and confusion in the ‘primary’ lives.

⁶³ Syme, *Ammianus and the HA* 183ff.; *The HA* 111f.; *Emperors* 260ff.; *HA Papers* 126ff.; 218ff., etc.

was the main object of the exercise, undertaken by a “rogue scholar”, the man still had strong views and puts them across, sometimes openly and obviously, sometimes subtly. He spoke as a senator and exalted the role of senators, who are even called *principes mundi* in one place (*Pr.* 11.2). Usurpers play an extraordinarily prominent role: the KG perhaps gave him this idea. But if, as now generally believed, the author had lived through Eugenius’ usurpation and its aftermath, his repeated assertion of the virtues of those whose defeat alone has caused them to be labelled ‘usurpers’ is readily understandable. It may be, of course, that he simply hoped to attract attention by abbreviating and continuing the popular Marius Maximus, and then outdoing Maximus by adding *vitae* precisely of figures to whom Maximus had declined to allot separate lives—and by ‘improving’ Maximus with fiction, unobtrusively tucked in here and there in the ‘primary’ lives based on Maximus, wholesale in the ‘secondary’ lives. In the ‘post-Maximus’ part, Herodian was exploited, up to 238, Dexippus for the years 238–270 or 275, then perhaps Flavianus. The literary competition was with the KG and with historians—Flavianus and Ammianus—whose work was of a very different character to that of Maximus.

Admiration for Diocletian and the tetrarchic system and hostility to hereditary succession are manifest,⁶⁴ with particularly strong comments about the dangers of boy emperors: *dii avertant pueros principes* (*Tac.* 6.5).⁶⁵ There are also warnings about the *princeps clausus* (*A* 43.1–4, cf. *AS* 66.3) the ruler cut off from the outside world.⁶⁶ Yet, at first sight inconsistently, the dynastic principle is treated positively in numerous passages exalting Claudius II and his posterity. But it is Constantius I and all his descendants, not just Constantine himself, that are meant. The former category takes us well beyond Julian, indeed well beyond Constantia, the posthumous daughter of Constantius II, who was married to Gratian, but died not long before him.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Kolb, *Untersuchungen*, 1ff.

⁶⁵ Hartke, *Kinderkaiser* passim; Paschoud, *Aurélien* . . . 269f.

⁶⁶ Stroheker, BHAC 1968/’69 (1970) 273ff.; Chastagnol, BHAC 1982/’83 (1985) 149ff., with parallels, including from Synesius, not adduced as verbal echoes, but as representative of the same cultural milieu, viz. the age of Arcadius; Paschoud, *Aurélien* . . . 204.

⁶⁷ Ammianus 21.15.6; *PLRE* I *Constantia* 2. Mommsen raised his question, ‘*cui bono?*’, *Hermes* 25, 302f., with particular reference to the stress on the ancestry and descendants of Constantius I in the HA. O. Hirschfeld, *Kleine Schriften* (Berlin, 1913)

Further, there were descendants of Julius Constantius, half-brother of Constantine I: Justina, Magnentius' widow, whom Valentinian I married;⁶⁸ and, it now emerges, another Constantia, married to Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, prefect of Rome in 353–5 and 357–9 and father-in-law of Symmachus.⁶⁹ Hence Valentinian II could claim descent from Constantius—and his sister Galla, Theodosius' second wife. That marriage produced the princess Galla Placidia. Thus flattery of senatorial families linked by descent to Constantius I and by extension alleged descendants of Claudius II may explain the HA's attitude. Remarkably, Probus is praised even more than Claudius. One reason may be Probus' deference to the senate, on which the author could have found hints in his sources.⁷⁰ But "many said that Probus was a kinsman of Claudius, the best and most venerable emperor": the author suspends judgement, since the kinship is allegedly attested only by one Greek writer, but remembers reading in a journal (*ephemeris*) that Probus had a sister called Claudia (*Pr.* 3.3–4). Of course, praise of Probus was also a chance to flatter the Anicii with the prophecy about Probus' descendants who settled around Verona and were all to hold *summīs honoribus* (*Pr.* 24.1–3).⁷¹

The author certainly sought to interest the contemporary aristocracy by repeated naming of their ancestors, real or imaginary. A few examples may be given. Bogus names abound in the work, many fabricated from persons named in classical writers, especially Cicero and Suetonius.⁷² By writing separate lives, unlike Maximus, of Aelius Caesar and L. Verus, he gave added stress to their family, the Ceionii Commodi. Their dubious link with the prominent fourth-century Ceionii Albini was fabricated in the *Albinus* by alleging that usurper's descent from Postumii, Albini, and Ceionii (*CLA.* 4.1ff.). Several spurious names, including a Ceionius Albinus, were inserted in the list

887ff., suggested that Gratian's marriage to Constantia was the explanation. (Baynes, *The HA*, offered propaganda for Julian instead.)

⁶⁸ J. Rougé, *Cahiers d'Histoire* 3 (1958) 11 and *Latomus* 33 (1974) 676ff.

⁶⁹ Alan Cameron, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 9 (1997) 295ff., shows that Constantia, wife of Orfitus, was from the house of Constantine, perhaps a daughter of Hannibalianus and Constantina.

⁷⁰ Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* 1064ff.

⁷¹ Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* XCVII.

⁷² A great many cases were pointed out by Domaszewski, *Die Personennamen* (1918); but his approach was extreme, based on the assumption that the HA was written at Nemausus in the 6th century. See rather Syme, *Emperors* 1ff.

of forty-one noble victims of Severus (§ 13.1–7).⁷³ That there are five fictitious ‘Maecii’ and three ‘Maeciani’ is doubtless because of Furius Maecius Gracchus, prefect of Rome in 379.⁷⁴ *Posterī* are, to be sure, mentioned of third-century figures who did indeed have descendants in Theodosian Rome: those of Gallienus are given as a reason for omitting further discreditable detail on that emperor (*Gall.* 19.8–20.1); Zenobia’s *posterī* are mentioned more briefly (*TT* 27.2).⁷⁵ There are two transparent allusions to Nicomachus Flavianus: the Nicomachus who translated a letter of Zenobia into Greek (*A* 27.6) and the senator ‘Maecius Faltonius Nicomachus’ who delivers the vigorous speech against boy emperors (*Tac.* 5.3–7.1).⁷⁶

It used to be maintained that the HA had little interest in Christianity. Explicit references are limited, and it was a long time before anyone took notice of ‘religious propaganda’ in the work.⁷⁷ Straub went to the other extreme, regarding the HA as a *Historia adversus Christianos*.⁷⁸ There are, certainly, implicit anti-Christian attitudes, for example the denial of Lactantius’ claim that no attempt was made to liberate the persecutor Valerian from Persian captivity.⁷⁹ One may note also that the lacuna might have been deliberately created, to avoid the embarrassment of treating the allegedly Christian Philip and the persecutors Decius and Valerian.⁸⁰ (Where they are mentioned elsewhere, Philip is portrayed very negatively, while Decius and Valerian, who recur frequently, are treated as ideal emperors).⁸¹

Further, the disproportionately lengthy and mainly fictional lives of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander can be read as coded portrayals

⁷³ ‘Ceionius Albinus’ occurs at *S* 13.3.

⁷⁴ Syme, *Ammianus and the HA* 162f., and *Emperors* 169.

⁷⁵ Chausson, *Journal des Savants* 1997, esp. 306, finds links between the Egnatii, descended from Gallienus’ mother’s family, and the fourth century Ceionii and Nicomachi; on Zenobia’s descendants, Callu, *HAC* n.s. V (1997) 71ff.

⁷⁶ Honoré, *Virius Nicomachus Flavianus* 16f., argues that the speech is a version of an actual address by Flavianus; against, Paschoud, *Aurélien* . . . 265ff.

⁷⁷ Geffcken, *Hermes* 55 (1920) 279ff., was the first serious examination.

⁷⁸ Straub, *Heidnische Geschichtsapologetik*.

⁷⁹ As shown by Alföldi, *BHAC* 1963 (1964) 1ff., comparing Lact., *De mort. pers.* 5.5, and HA, *Val.* 3.2, etc. That the author’s religious attitude is less than blatant and all-pervasive is hardly surprising if he wrote as a pagan c. 400. Compare Ammianus, often held to have been moderate in his treatment of Christianity: Barnes, *Ammianus*, esp. 77ff., detects subtly worded hostility.

⁸⁰ Birley, *BHAC* 1972/74 (1976) 55ff. (replying to criticism by Syme, *Emperors & Biography* 199ff., of an earlier version of the argument); supported by den Hengst, *Prefaces* 70ff.

⁸¹ Cf. esp. Syme, *Emperors* 194ff.

of Constantine and Julian.⁸² Elagabalus, who sought to destroy the national cults of Rome, is a parody of Constantine—one may single out his refusal to ascend the Capitol and his destruction of tombs on the Vatican (*Hel.* 15.7, 23.1). The morally pure and tolerant Severus Alexander—who ascended the Capitol every week when in Rome (*AS* 43.5)—reflects the pagans’ ideal emperor: his favour to Jews and tolerance of Christians (22.4); his “morning worship (when pure) in his *lararium*, in which he had statues both of deified emperors (but only the best) and holier souls, among them Apollonius and, according to a writer of his times, Christ, Abraham, and Orfeus, and others of this kind, and of his ancestors” (29.2); his plan to construct temples for Christ without statues, abandoned when he realised this would lead to everyone becoming Christians and the temples being deserted (43–6); his observance of the golden mean (51.7–8).

Passages in the *Aurelian* likewise have a strong religious focus: the senators are criticized by the emperor for behaving as if they were in a *Christianorum ecclesia* rather than in *templo deorum omnium* and for failing to consult the Sibylline books (*A* 18.1ff., esp. 20.5). Apollonius of Tyana, the pagans’ counterpart to Jesus, appears to Aurelian in a vision (*A* 24.2ff.). Towards the end of the work the Egyptians are scathingly criticized in a fictitious letter of Hadrian, especially the Christians and their bishops (*Q* 7.5–8.7). Such striking examples apart, there are dozens of brief—fictitious—statements, often tucked unobtrusively into otherwise ‘factual’ contexts, which reveal the author as an adherent of the old religion.

If, as seems most likely, the HA was written some time between 395 and 405, it may be characterized as a rewriting of the second and third centuries as its author believed they ought to have been. It is a reaction to Christianity triumphant and intolerant: the pagans should be treated with tolerance because they had been tolerant when they themselves were strong; they too had had their great figures, Apollonius the equal of Christ, and the morally pure and tolerant Severus Alexander, contrasted with the intolerant and morally perverted Elagabalus who foreshadowed Constantine.⁸³ Other fea-

⁸² Turcan, *Bulletin G. Budé* 37 (1988) 38ff.; Cracco Ruggini, HAC n.s. I (1991) 123ff.

⁸³ See esp. Paschoud, BHAC 1977/’78 (1980) 163ff.; id., in *I cristiani e l'impero nel IV secolo* (1988) 155ff.; *Cristianesimo nella storia* 11 (1990) 545ff.; *Acme* 50 (1997) 79ff. His views are summarized here.

tures of the work which reveal the author's mentality have already been stressed: his wish to embellish the memory of usurpers; to flatter the genealogical pretensions of the aristocracy and to uphold the supreme dignity of the Roman senate; and, not least, his sense of fun and love of words, his growing enthusiasm for fiction. It may be doubted whether he intended to achieve more than to entertain himself and a small circle of like-minded friends. That this circle was centred among the Symmachi and Nicomachi Flaviani seems at least probable, given that the work seems to have survived in the library of Q. Aurelius Memmius Symmachus, consul 485, who used it for his own *Historia Romana*.⁸⁴

A word, finally, on the six pseudonyms.⁸⁵ That 'Spartianus' and 'Lampridius' are both called 'Aelius' may have something to do with the HA's inception with Aelius Hadrianus. The two cognomina are both rare. 'Julius Capitolinus' has been explained as a reminiscence of Cicero and Livy.⁸⁶ 'Vulcacius Gallicanus' may reflect Cicero or Republican literature too, but may echo the names of fourth century senators.⁸⁷ The cognomen of 'Flavius Vopiscus' may have been inspired by *vopiscus* meaning 'surviving twin'.⁸⁸ As for 'Trebellius Pollio', the cognomen has been taken as an allusion to Asinius Pollio's negative view of Caesar's *Commentarii*.⁸⁹ One may go further: the tribunes Asinius Pollio and L. Trebellius acted together in 47 BC. Four years later, Cicero commented witheringly on Trebellius, who had assumed the cognomen Fides: *O Fide! hoc enim opinor Trebellium sumpsisse cognomen. quae potest esse maior fides quam fraudare creditores*. Claims by 'Trebellius Pollio' to be 'preserving fides'—*hos ego versus a quodam*

⁸⁴ PLRE II Symmachus 10. See Enßlin, *Des Symmachus Historia Romana* (1949); Callu, BHAC 1982/'83 (1985) 89ff.

⁸⁵ Domaszewski, *Personennamen* 11ff.; Syme, *Emperors* 73ff.

⁸⁶ Chastagnol, BHAC 1986/'89 (1991) 21ff., and *Histoire Auguste* CIIIff., suggests an evocation of the hero of 387 B.C., M. Manlius Capitolinus (Livy 5.31.1, 47; 6.16.2; Cicero, *De domo* 101, 144). Approved by Brandt, *Kommentar* 109.

⁸⁷ Chastagnol, *Histoire Auguste* CIII.

⁸⁸ Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 7.47: *Vopiscos appellabant e geminis qui retenti utero nascerentur altero interempto abortu—namque maxima etsi rara circa hoc miracula existunt*, adduced by Hohl, *Klio* 12 (1912) 474, and discussed by Paschoud, *Aurélien* . . . XXVI. (Cf. n. 90 below.)

⁸⁹ Paschoud, *Aurélien* . . . 68, developing den Hengst, *Prefaces* 106f., on Suet. *D. Iul.* 56.4: *Pollio Asinius parum diligenter parumque integra veritate compositos putat*. Den Hengst, *ib.*, 68f., derives the name 'Pollio' from Juv. 6.387f., *an Capitolinum deberet Pollio quicum sperare et fidibus promittere*, which has the merit of linking by association 'Capitolinus' and 'Pollio' (and, one may add, *fidibus*, albeit meaning a musical instrument here, is nicely echoed by *fidem servarem* in *TT* 11.6).

grammatico translatos ita posui, ut fidem servarem, non quo <non> melius potuerint transferri, sed ut fidelitas historica servaretur (T 11.6)—surely indicate what the author was thinking of when he chose his fifth pseudonym.⁹⁰

The author confessed that he was dictating, with such haste that he hardly had the chance to draw breath. This was an excuse for lack of literary polish, facts not *eloquentia* (T 33.8).⁹¹ If this claim may be believed, it would be enough to explain much of the incoherence and internal contradictions in the work, and the mixture of styles. Soon afterwards he claims to have been given *carte blanche* by the prefect Tiberianus to write whatever he wanted, a licence to lie (A 2.2). Whatever the order in which the *vitae* were composed, the author had clearly adopted this view at an early stage. It did not necessarily make his task simpler. One may apply to the HA an apt comment by Paschoud (referring to Zosimus): “*Proust écrit quelque part que dire la vérité ne pose aucun problème, tandis que mentir systématiquement exige une ingéniosité toujours accrue: la vérité s’harmonise tout naturellement avec la vérité, le mensonge exige un effort sans cesse plus intense de cohérence.*”⁹²

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⁹⁰ Plut. *Ant.* 9.1–2. Cic. *Phil.* 6.11, cf. 13.26, *et fidei patronus, fraudator creditorum*, Trebellius. Cicero also attacked Trebellius in *Phil.* 10.22 and 11.13, and just before that, 11.11, had called Bestia *alter Caesar Vopiscus*, referring to the consular candidature of 90 BC. Noted by Domaszewski, *Personennamen* 11f., who also saw the reference to the Antonian Trebellius (citing *Phil.* 11.13), but missed ‘Fides’. See now on ‘Vopiscus’ and ‘Pollio’ A.R. Birley, *HAC* n.s. VIII (2002) 33ff.

⁹¹ Hence perhaps just a *topos*. But see Schlumberger, *BHAC* 1972/’74 (1976) 221ff. Hartke, *Geschichte*, esp. 146ff., proposed that the HA had been composed in the four months between the Frigidus and the death of Theodosius by the younger Nicomachus; modified in *id.*, *Kinderkaiser* 412ff.

⁹² Paschoud, *Cinq études* (1975) 217. I am grateful to François Paschoud and François Chausson, who kindly sent me copies of their most recent articles, and to Wolf Liebeschuetz for discussion of Nicomachus’ *Annales*. I remain, of course, responsible for the use to which these have been put; and it need hardly be added that it has been impossible, in the space allocated, to do justice to the vast literature on the HA. The Bibliography is principally of works cited above.

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Studies

1. *Historia Augusta Colloquia*

- a) The first Colloquium was published as *Historia-Augusta-Colloquium Bonn 1963*. *Antiquitas Reihe 4, Beiträge zur Historia-Augusta-Forschung, Band 2*, unter Mitwirkung von J. Straub hrsg. von A. Alföldi (Bonn, Habelt, 1964). Twelve more volumes were published in the same 'Reihe'; up to 1977/1978 edited by Alföldi with Straub's 'Mitwirkung', the next three edited by Straub alone; the last, with the Colloquia of 1986 and 1989, was edited by K. Rosen, (= Beitr. Bd. 21, 1991). These Colloquia are abbreviated in the notes as BHAC, with dates of Colloquium and publication.
- b) Vol. I of the *Historiae Augustae Colloquia, Nova Series*, was published as *Colloquium Parisinum 1990. Atti dei Convegni sulla Historia Augusta, a cura di G. Bonamente e N. Duval* (Macerata, Facoltà di lettere e filosofia, 1991). The series, edited by Bonamente and colleagues (and from II onwards published by Edipuglia, Bari), has now reached VIII (2000). These are abbreviated HAC n.s., with volume number and date of publication.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , hrsg. v. H. Temporini und W. Haase, Berlin-New York, 1972–.
<i>BHAC</i>	<i>Bonner-Historia-Augusta-Colloquium</i> , Bonn, 1963–1991.
<i>FCH</i>	R.C. Blockley, <i>The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire</i> , 3 vols., Liverpool 1981–1983.
<i>FHG</i>	C. and T. Müller, <i>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</i> , 5 vols., Paris 1841–1847.
CCL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina.
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte.
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> .
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi.
PG	Patrologia Graeca.
PL	Patrologia Latina.
<i>PLRE</i>	A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, J. Morris, <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , I–III, Cambridge 1971.
PO	Patrologia Orientalis.
<i>RE</i>	<i>Paulys Realencyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> .
SCh	Sources chrétiennes.